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ABSTRACT

Because of the poor response rate to St. Johns River Community College's follow-up surveys on program completers, the college decided to develop a postcard format survey form in the hope of improving survey response rates. After reviewing a similar follow-up survey postcard used by another two-year college in Florida, the project staff settled on a perforated postcard that contained a message to the program completer and the prestamped address of the school on one side and a set of survey questions and space for the completer's address on the other side. A 50 percent increase in the survey response rate was noted with the first mailing of the new postcard survey instrument. Data from the returned postcards were incorporated into a database of employers in the tricounty area that includes the types of degrees and certificates required for the jobs offered by the different employers. A computer program was developed to allow students to identify potential employers of specific program completers in the college's degree and certificate programs, and efforts to make the database available to students currently enrolled in programs at the college are underway. When completed, the database will allow students to enter a training program, search for potential employers one county at a time, and obtain a printout of employers identified during the search. (Appendixes to this report include the Florida state legislative mandate for placement standards and an employer data worksheet.) (MN)

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FINAL REPORT

Project No: 542-15260-6-2H73

From October 1, 1985 To June 30, 1986

A Follow Up Evaluation Project to Establish an Employer Data Base of the Counties Served by St. Johns River Community College

Florida Department of Education
Divison of Vocational, Adult and Community Education
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

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FINAL REPORT

Project No: 542-15260-6-2H73

From October 1, 1985 To June 30, 1986

A Follow Up Evaluation Project to Establish an Employer Data Base of the Counties Served by St. Johns River Community College

St. Johns River Community College
5001 St. Johns Avenue
Palatka, Florida 32077

O'Neal Williams

The project reported herein was conducted pursuant to a grant from the Division of Vocational, Adult and Community Education, Florida Department of Education. Contractors undertaking such projects are encouraged to express freely their professional judgements in the conduct of the project. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent the official position or policy of the Florida Department of Education.

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ABSTRACT OF THE FINAL REPORT

Title of Project: Placement and Follow-Up Evaluation Project

Organization: St. Johns River Community College
Project Director: O'Neal Williams
Expenditures: $1,913.50
Duration of Project: October 1, 1985 - June 30, 1986

Problem

During the past several years St. Johns River Community College has reported follow-up information on completers by collecting data from long survey forms sent through the mail with poor results. Our program completers are unfamiliar with the local employment opportunities in the tri-county area.

Objective

The College wants to develop the postcard format survey form for completers and leavers to improve response rate of the afore-mentioned groups. A data base of employers in the tri-county and the types of degree or certificate completers they will hire will be developed and made available to vocational students.

Procedure

One postcard from Mid-Florida Tech in Orlando, Florida, was reviewed. A decision was made to include only the questions required to collect data for state reports on the postcard. The employer data base would include employers who were members of the local Chambers of Commerce since we did not have the time nor money to contact every operating business in the tri-county area.

Results and Potential Utilization

Two thousand perforated 4" X 6" postcards were printed with a message to the student and pre-stamped with a return address to the College on one side. The other side had the survey questions and an address space for the student. A fifty percent (50%) increase in response was noted with the first mailing for the 1986 follow-up report. A computer program was developed to allow students to identify potential employers of specific program completers in the degree and certificate programs.

Introduction

St. Johns River Community College was established as a public institution in 1958 to serve the counties of Clay, Putnam, and St. Johns. The college is located in Palatka, Putnam County, which is located in Northeast Florida. It is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Florida State Board of Education.

St. Johns is not an area vocational school; nor does it have responsibility for all adult education in the service area. The major purpose of St. Johns River Community College are:

1. To offer the first two years of college courses for students who plan to transfer and complete a degree at a senior college or university.
2. To offer programs of education in the business and technical fields which will qualify students, upon completions for immediate employment in business and industry.
3. To offer continuing courses for adults who wish to pursue general education or vocational studies or wish to upgrade employment related competencies.
4. To serve as a center for community enrichment and provide adult education for Putnam County.

The college until recently had no specific placement requirements for mesuring the success of individual programs. However, in 1984 a mandate was passed under Florida Statute 229.551 requiring specific placement standards be met by individual programs in order for those programs to continue to receive funding. See Appendix A, Legislative Mandate for Placement Standards. The college must improve the procedure for collecting data on completers and improve the system for disseminating information on local employers in order to meet the placement standards.

Methodology

The project director and the director of business and technical division decided to use a perforated 4" X 6" postcard with the College's return address and pre-stamped with the survey questions. The other portion of the postcard would contain directions for the student and space for a computer printed address label to the student. The two-piece postcard won our approval since the student could tear off the directions after reading, answer the questions, and drop the card in the mailbox. This eliminated the four pages and non-stamped envelope that has been used in the past.

The decision to establish a computerized data base of local employers was made based on the fact that many of our students were unaware of many employment opportunities in our service district. Since we did not have enough money to hire a staff to conduct a survey with every employer in the district, we used employers who were members of the Chambers of Commerce in either county. The information on employers was collected on an Employer Data Worksheet (EDW), which contains the county, employer, address, and telephone number and job opportunities. See Appendix B.

A data processing technology program completer was hired by the college to develop a computer program to include the information from the Employer Data Worksheets. The former student was hired May 1, 1986, through June 30, 1986, for this project. Information on approximately 1,800 employers who were members of the Chambers of Commerce in either Clay, Putnam, or St. Johns Counties was the program employer data bank.

The employer data bank allows a student to enter the program and search for information in one county at a time. Once the county has been selected, the student enters the program of study (data processing, clerical, etc.) he/she is under in order to locate employers who will hire a student with that degree or certificate. After this information is entered, the student pushes any key and a list of employers appears on the monitor. The student may get a printout of this list if there is a printer attached to the computer or he/she may simply copy by hand. Should he/she wish to view more employers listed under this heading or terminate the search, he/she would follow the directions at the bottom of the screen. The student will be able to obtain the name, address, and telephone number of potential employers who might hire someone with his/her degree or certificate. This search can be done once the student decides to pursue a program in the business or technical area of the College.

Findings and Analysis

Based on the increased number of responses to the postcard survey format over the four- to five-page survey used in prior years, it appears that the shorter, pre-stamped form is more appealing to the students. The employer data base program provides the College and the student with a library of approximately 1800 potential employers in the area. This library should assist the student in locating potential employers before or after completing program requirements.

Conclusions

The development and utilization of the postcard survey format has already increased the response rate of completers by fifty percent (50%) on the first mailing for the 1986 follow-up report over 1985. Should this trend continue, it will help in receiving information on completers who are employed out of state or in the military. This will assist us in meeting the placement standards. With the employer data base program made available to potential completers, it should help increase the number of employed completers, which will assist us in reaching our seventy percent (70%) placement goal for all programs with completers.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE FOR PLACEMENT STANDARDS

1985 Vocational Education Bill

FLORIDA STATUE 229.053 Education Management

As a part of the system of Educational Accountability, the Department shall conduct program evaluations for Vocational Education. These evaluations shall cover attainment of goals and objectives, manpower needs and placement, productivity, cost-effectiency, and resource requirements. Funding vocational education shall reflect the results of these evaluations. Any secondary job preparatory vocational program in which the placement rate of persons completing the program is less than 70 percent for any given years, and any postsecondary job preparatory vocational program in which the placement rate is less than 60 percent for any given year, shall be autoneticelly reviewed by the Department of Education. The program review shall be submitted to the appropriate regional coordinating councils and shall be accompanied by a plan for improving the progras's placement rate. Any job preparatory vocational program in which the placement rate of persons completing the program is less than 70 percent for 3 consecutive years, beginning with the 1986-87 school year, shall be ineligible for future state funding. The state board shall adopt rules to implement this part. For the purposes of this section, a student in a secondary job preparatory vocational program shall be considered to be a "placement" if he has become employed in an occupation requiring the use of the competencies acquired in his vocational program, has entered the military, or has continued on to postsecondary education. A student in a postsecondary job preparatory vocational program shall be considered a "placement" if he has become employed in an occupation requiring the use of competencies acquired in his vocational program, has entered the military, or has continued on to related postsecondary education.

Appendix A

EMPLOYER DATA WORKSHEET

County City Employer Address Telephone Number	Job Opportunities												
	Accounting Clerk	Clerical	Data Processing	Electronics	Fire Science	General Business	Marketing/Management	Office Career	Quality Control	Retail Sales	Small Business Management	Stenography	
LEACH BOOKKEEPING & TAX SERVICE 752 Blanding Blvd., #129 Orange Park 272-1133	X	X						X					
NORRIS ACCOUNTING & TAX SERVICE 401 Walnut Street Green Cove Springs 284-3572	X	X						X					
ORANGE PARK BOOKKEEPING SERVICE P.O. Box 1514 Orange Park 269-3776	X	X						X					
BETTY ROSS ACCOUNTING & TAX SERVICE 420 Kingsley Ave. Orange Park 269-3400	X	X						X					
ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS Safeguard Business Systems 1532 Kingsley Ave. Orange Park 264-5003	X	X						X					